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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6517
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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1832
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002770

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SUBJECT: TWILIGHT OF THE MORAL VIGILANTES? -- ATTACKS BY
HARD-LINERS DURING RAMADAN TAPER OFF

REF: JAKARTA 2241

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulates Medan and Surabaya.

12. (C) SUMMARY -- Despite a serious flare-up recently near Jakarta, incidents of hard-line Muslim vigilante groups "sweeping," e.g., closing down entertainment establishments during the fasting month of Ramadan, have dropped significantly this year. Effective police and community action seem to be the reasons. Ramadan ends in mid-October, so extremists--who are still a presence--have time for mayhem. Mission issued a Warden Message prior to Ramadan warning U.S. citizens to be cautious. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) DECLINE IN SWEEPING -- Widespread vigilantism, or "sweeping," by extreme Muslim groups witnessed during the 2005 Ramadan season curtailed in 2006, and has dropped significantly again in 2007, human rights and other sources told poloff. Activity by the notorious Ramadan vigilante group, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), has dropped dramatically, for example. Sources said this is due to: more local regulations restricting entertainment establishments' hours of operations during Ramadan; better police enforcement of these regulations; and better police prevention against vigilantism.

14. (SBU) BOGOR HIJINKS EXCEPTED -- The one highly notable exception was a September 30 rampage by FPI and the Islamic Defenders Force (LPI) who marched in Bogor (a city near Jakarta) carrying sticks and vandalizing hotels, cafes and nightclubs that remained open, the media reported. The groups were reportedly looking for prostitutes and their customers. A cafe and a hotel were reportedly badly damaged but no one injured. The local police chief stated that "the police will not tolerate any further attacks on private businesses," adding that police would be "tough on citizens who damage private property."

15. (SBU) POLICE TAKE A STAND -- According to various sources,

the Bogor incident was the first serious act of Ramadan vigilantism in 2007. Numerous other attempts by FPI to close down business establishments have all been thwarted by police, according to media reports, including the following:

- In Jakarta's Gunung Sahari neighborhood on September 29, police clashed with FPI members attempting to raid restaurants and nightclubs, arresting two FPI members.
- At Samarinda, East Kalimantan, on September 29, police prevented FPI from confronting a group of intoxicated youth, defusing a stand-off.
- In Palu, South Sulawesi, on September 28, police used persuasion to stop more than a hundred members of the Islamic Followers Alliance from attacking nightclubs.
- In Depok (outskirts of Jakarta) on September 9, police stopped FPI from raiding nightclubs by meeting with FPI leaders and instructing them to stay off the streets.

16. (U) Local police have also acted decisively in shutting down establishments that violated local Ramadan ordinances. On September 18, in Pekanbaru, Riau, North Sumatra, police supported by military elements closed street food stalls and coffee shops operating against an order by the mayor, prohibiting restaurants and amusement centers from operating during the Ramadan daylight hours. Some business owners were arrested and sentenced to three months in jail or pay a USD 55 fine. In Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, on September 17, authorities shut down food stalls and detained vendors.

17. (C) THERE IS STILL TIME -- Ramadan ends in mid-October, so extremists still have time for mayhem. Groups like FPI still have members who remain willing to take to the streets. (Note: FPI supporters in August, for example, held a

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threatening demonstration that drove Miss Universe out of Bandung -- see reftel.) Their activities are under significantly more constraints than they were even two years ago, however, when they acted almost with impunity. Clearly, when you get arrested for a little bit of bullying and smashing, it is just not as fun as it once was. Mission issued a Warden Message prior to Ramadan warning U.S. citizens to be cautious.

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